

IN THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 (original): A method comprising:

stocking a predetermined number of sets of foot orthotics, each set having a standard arch height that is unique for that set;

measuring an arch height of a sole of a foot; and

selecting an orthotic from the set for which the standard arch height most closely matches the measured arch height.

Claim 2 (currently amended): The method of claim 1 wherein the predetermined number equals of sets is only three.

Claim 3 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein the measuring step includes determining the arch height from a footprint of the sole.

Claim 4 (original): The method of claim 3 wherein the footprint is a thermal image of the sole.

Claim 5 (currently amended): The method of claim 1 wherein the orthotics can be heat-softened and the method further comprises the step, after the selecting step, of pressing the sole against the selected orthotic while the selected orthotic is installed in a shoe in a heat-softened state for the orthotic to conform to the shape of the sole.

Claim 6 (currently amended): A method comprising:

engaging a sole of a foot against a thermal imaging device that yields while the foot is not in a shoe to obtain from the device a thermal image of the sole; and

determining a characteristic of the sole based on the thermal image.

Claim 7 (original): The method of claim 6 wherein the characteristic is an arch height of the sole.

Claim 8 (original): The method of claim 6 wherein the imaging device includes a thermally sensitive material that exhibits a change in color with a change in temperature.

Claim 9 (canceled)

Claim 10 (currently amended): The method of claim 8 wherein the feet sole is colder than the thermally sensitive material during the engaging step.

Claim 11 (currently amended): The method of claim 9 8 wherein the feet sole is warmer than the thermally sensitive material during the engaging step.

Claim 12 (currently amended): The method of claim 11 further comprising the step, before the engaging step, of warming the feet sole with a warming device.

Claim 13 (original): The method of claim 6 wherein the imaging device is in the form of a plate configured to lie flat on the ground, and the engaging step includes stepping on the device.

Claim 14 (canceled)

Claim 15 (currently amended): The method of claim 6 wherein the determining step includes determining pressure points of the sole based on the thermal image indicates pressure points of the sole.

Claim 16 (currently amended): The method of claim 6 wherein the determining step includes determining restricted blood flow locations of the sole based on the thermal image indicates restricted blood flow locations of the sole.

Claims 17-28 (canceled)

Claim 29 (previously presented): The method of claim 1 wherein the stocking step includes stocking the foot orthotics on a merchandise rack positioned adjacent to a thermal imaging device, and the measuring step includes obtaining a thermal image of the foot sole from the imaging device and determining the arch height of the foot sole from the thermal image.

Claim 30 (previously presented): The method of claim 29 wherein, during the stocking step, the imaging device lies flat on a floor.

Claim 31 (previously presented): The method of claim 29 wherein, during the stocking step, the imaging device is located in front of the rack.

Claim 32-34 (canceled)

Claim 35 (new): A method comprising:

engaging a sole of a foot against a thermal imaging device to obtain from the device a thermal image of the sole; and

determining an arch height of the sole based on the thermal image.

Claim 36 (new): The method of claim 35 wherein the imaging device includes a thermally sensitive material that exhibits a change in color with a change in temperature.

Claim 37 (new): The method of claim 36 wherein the device includes a rigid surface, and the thermally sensitive material lies flat over the rigid surface so as to prevent the material from bending when the sole is engaged against the device.

Claim 38 (new): The method of claim 35 further comprising the step, before the engaging step, of warming the sole with an electrical warming device.

Claim 39 (new): The method of claim 35 wherein the imaging device has a flat top surface, and the engaging step includes stepping on the top surface and the thermal image appearing on the top surface.

Claim 40 (new): A method comprising:

engaging a sole of a foot against a thermal imaging device to obtain from the device a thermal image of the sole, the imaging device including a thermally sensitive material, that exhibits a change in color with a change in temperature, lying flat over a rigid surface that prevents the material from bending when the sole is engaged against the device; and

determining a characteristic of the sole based on the thermal image.

Claim 41 (new): The method of claim 40 wherein the engaging step includes standing on the imaging device.

Claim 42 (new): The method of claim 40 wherein the characteristic is an arch height of the sole.

Claim 43 (new): A method comprising:

warming a sole of a foot with an electrical warming device;

engaging the warmed sole against a thermal imaging device to obtain from the device a thermal image of the sole; and

determining a characteristic of the sole based on the thermal image.

Claim 44 (new): The method of claim 43 wherein the engaging step includes standing on the imaging device.

Claim 45 (new): The method of claim 43 wherein the imaging device includes a thermally sensitive material that exhibits a change in color with a change in temperature.

Claim 46 (new): A method comprising:

warming a thermally sensitive material to a temperature that is warmer than a sole of a foot, the material being part of a thermal imaging device and configured to exhibit a change in color with a change in temperature;

engaging the sole against the device to obtain from the material a thermal image of the sole based on different locations on the material being cooled by the sole to different extents; and

determining a characteristic of the sole based on the thermal image.

Claim 47 (new): The method of claim 46 wherein the characteristic is an arch height of the sole.

Claim 48 (new): A method comprising:

stocking foot orthotics of different arch heights;

measuring an arch height of a sole of a foot; and

selecting, from the stocked orthotics, an orthotic of which the arch height most closely matches the measured arch height.

Claim 49 (new): The method of claim 48 wherein the measuring step includes obtaining a thermal image of the sole and determining the arch height from image.

Claim 50 (new): The method of claim 49 wherein the stocking step includes stocking the orthotics on a merchandise rack positioned adjacent to a thermal imaging device, and the measuring step includes obtaining the thermal image from the imaging device.

Claim 51 (new): The method of claim 48 wherein the orthotics can be heat-softened, and the method further comprises the step, after the selecting step, of pressing the sole against the selected orthotic while the selected orthotic is installed in a shoe in a heat-softened state for the orthotic to conform to the shape of the sole.

Claim 52 (new): A method comprising:

stocking foot orthotics of different arch heights in packages, each package imprinted with a reference footprint that is indicative of the arch height of the orthotic in the package;
obtaining a footprint of a sole of a foot;
comparing the footprint of the sole to the reference footprints on the packages; and
selecting the orthotic that is in the package for which the reference footprint most closely matches the footprint of the sole.

Claim 53 (new): The method of claim 52 wherein the footprint of the sole is a thermal image of the sole.

Claim 54 (new): The method of claim 53 wherein the stocking step includes stocking the orthotics, packaged in the packages, on a merchandise rack positioned adjacent to a thermal imaging device, and the measuring step includes obtaining the thermal image from the imaging device.